

INNOVATION COUNCIL MEETING • 26th June 2019

- Purpose of the meeting was to provide advice and support from an innovation stand point for the finalisation of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) submission.
- The next meeting on 25 September will be a joint one with the Growth Hub which will focus on the LIS and SME growth potential.
- Presentation from Alice, Metro Dynamics. The Government is really testing the evidence base of submissions. New analysis is being undertaken, looking at different sectors, Towns and Rural, ideas and innovation strands. The data is not very comprehensive around ideas, business R & D and SME activity.
- The productivity dashboard identifies strengths and weaknesses and the output gap in Greater Lincolnshire is £8.9 billion, based on data collated in 2013. Greater Lincolnshire is particularly lower on new ideas - R & D spend per worker. Investment in innovation is the third lowest. Are businesses with the highest levels of investment in the area working together and collaborating? The University has great strength in contributing to innovation in business and generating collaborations.
- Key questions: How can innovation be better mapped? How can business interaction with the University be increase?
- Start up and survival rates are calculated using VAT and Companies House but this does not include sole traders and those who are not VAT registered.
- Support and growth in the agricultural sector is a strong area, can thinking and activities be transferred to other sectors? The strength in this area is as a result of a deliberate LEP strategy putting priority emphasis on Agrifood and the University supported this ambition. The University will have the largest Agri Robotics Department in the world for which funding has been received. The timescales of the statistics will not reflect the impact of policy and investment in Agrifood so more case studies are required to make a compelling case. Mark Tinsley's leadership in this sector at LEP level was critical and leadership for other sectors is vital.
- Greater Lincolnshire is not converting its challenges to assets e.g. Professional people retire here & how could ageing become an asset? – through volunteering and mentoring. Can information be collected on the type of retirees in the area? There is a need to think and do so activities can be commercialised. The Co-Op are transforming pharmacies into Health Centres. Work is being carried out on the creative industries as there is a need to build on corridors and clusters.
- Suggestion that the Council put information on R&D support programmes on their rates bills to businesses.
- University of Lincoln research expertise is aligned to the priorities of the LEP, ERDF, Innovation UK and the Regional Growth Fund – Agri Food, Rural Health and Care, Creative Industries.
- There needs to be sufficient lead time for businesses to show the impact of innovation support and interventions. The link between skills and innovations, internship programmes and Graduate impact on new business start ups, processes and innovation in firms need to be measured over time and highlighted.
- Cornwall and Lincolnshire are underfunded from Central Government – information is needed to make the case for growth focused funding approach.
- A focus on clusters and a seamless offer of support for business across agencies is needed.
- Consider ways of creating centres/clusters to drive innovation without new capital build. Consider the High street changes being undertaken e.g. Derby and Lichfield.
- The likely closure of British Steel and the subsequent redundancy payments may lead to people setting up a business. Consideration needs to be given to support programmes now not once it has happened. Could there be a satellite of the University in Scunthorpe and a test project on an innovation theme? There is no link between the Job Centres and HE in these situations which needs to be addressed.
- Barriers to Innovation A) SME risk appetite – adopt a shared responsibility around risk via business support. B) Desire for stability, particularly in land based businesses hampers innovation. There is a need to promote the message that innovation does not have to be a major business change/decision/investment.
- Connectivity is key to cluster development – across transport, digital and innovation. The case continually needs to be made that rural areas are different to major cities/towns.

